

## PART VI

## Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Livestock, dairy and poultry are secondary to commercial crop agriculture in Columbia County. The value of all livestock and livestock products sold from Columbia County farms totaled \$627,500 during 1954. This amounted to only 7 percent of the value of all farm products sold from the county in that year. Only 39 farms in the county were classed as livestock farms by the Census of Agriculture in 1954. However, over four out of every five farms in the county do keep some livestock as a supplementary source of income. Cattle and calves dominate the livestock industry. Hogs are the second largest source of income to livestock farmers followed by poultry, dairying and sheep in order of importance. The upper valleys of the Tucannon and Touchet Valleys in the Blue Mountains are chief livestock areas.

Livestock Trends

Several major changes have occurred in the livestock industry since 1939. There has been a marked upward trend in beef cattle numbers accompanied by a

Total Value of Columbia County Livestock: \$1,665,455

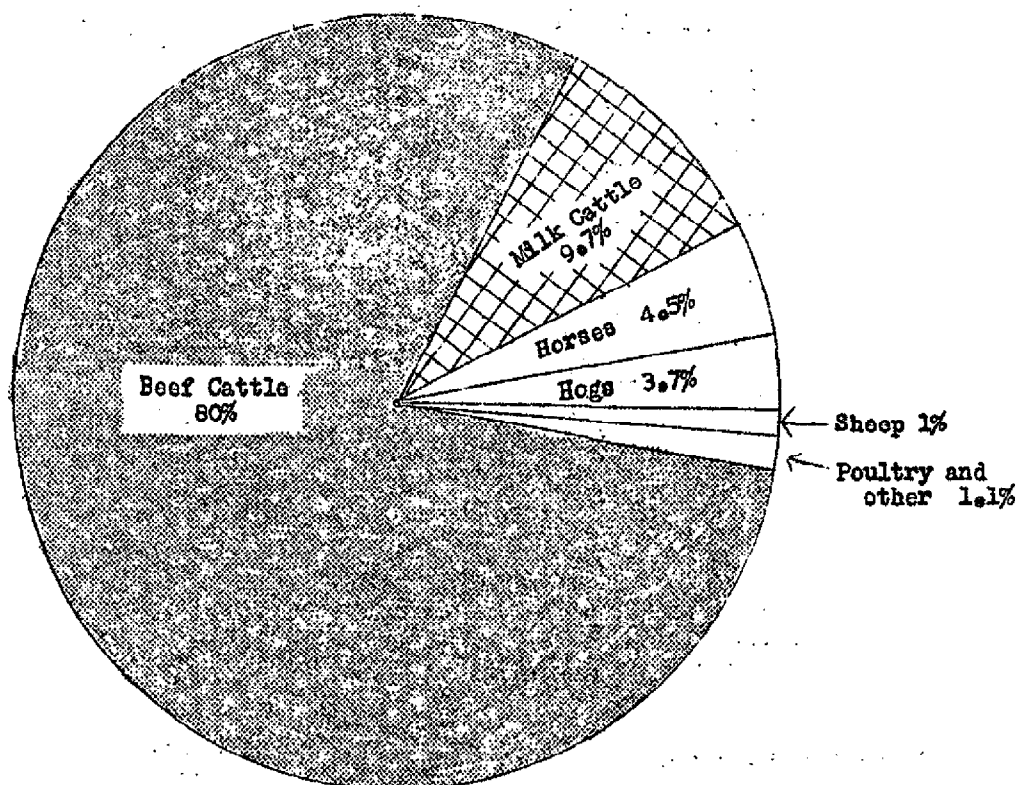


Figure 11.- Value of Livestock on Farms  
Columbia County, 1954  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

sharp decline in dairy cattle numbers since 1943. Sheep reached a peak of over 25,000 head about 1930, but have declined steadily since 1930. Hog numbers were largest around 1925 and have decreased slowly since that time. Horse and mule numbers began decreasing with the beginning of mechanization after 1920. Poultry flocks and egg production have declined. The general trend has been for all types of livestock except beef cattle to become less important in the last 30 years. This trend is common to most southeastern Washington counties.

#### Cattle: Beef and Dairy Farming.

Raising beef cattle is the leading type of livestock farming. Beef cattle now outnumber milk cows almost 12 to 1. Beef livestock raising has tended to run in cycles, but with a general increase in total head since 1950. About 11,700 beef cattle, highest on record, were estimated for Columbia County in 1956. Three hundred of the county's farms kept cattle and calves in 1954 and about 225 Columbia County farms sold cattle and calves alive. A total of 4,760 head were sold with the value of the sales approaching \$472,000. In numbers, the sales were almost evenly divided between cattle and calves.

Table 23.- Cattle on Farms  
Columbia County, 1939-1956

Year	January 1 Numbers on Farms		
	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	9,300	6,600	2,700
1940	8,500	5,700	2,800
1941	10,000	7,300	2,700
1942	11,500	8,800	2,700
1943	12,500	9,600	2,900
1944	13,500	10,700	2,800
1945	10,000	7,700	2,300
1946	9,000	7,100	1,900
1947	9,000	7,300	1,700
1948	8,900	7,100	1,800
1949	9,700	8,000	1,700
1950	9,300	7,700	1,600
1951	10,000	8,700	1,300
1952	11,000	9,900	1,100
1953	12,000	11,100	900
1954	12,000	11,100	900
1955	12,000	11,000	1,000
1956	12,700	11,700	1,000

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Divn.  
State of Washington

Dairying is secondary to beef raising in Columbia County. The number of dairy cattle increased slightly in the early World War II period with a peak of 2,900 head in 1954. Numbers then declined except for an increase of about 100 head during 1954. Until after 1944 the production of cream was more important than whole milk but cream production has declined rapidly since 1939. Whole milk production has also declined since 1939 with the decline relatively slow until after 1949. Between 1949 and 1954 whole milk production dropped to less than one-half the 1949 total.

The number of farms selling dairy products has also declined rapidly and today only the larger producers are left. Farms selling whole milk declined from 25 in 1949 to 4 in 1954. Cream producers were reduced from about 140 to 50 in the same period. Columbia County farms engaged in dairying dropped from 270 in 1939 to 55 in 1954 and on no farms was milk the major source of revenue in 1954 according to the Census of Agriculture. In the 1940's dairy farming was the third most important source of income to Columbia County livestock producers but now it is fourth behind beef, hogs and poultry.

Table 24.- Dairy Products Sold From Farms  
Columbia County, 1939-1954

Year	Whole Milk Sold From Farms		Cream Sold From Farms		Butter Sold From Farms	
	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)
1939	1,210,536	\$24,210	101,770	\$25,443	4,140	\$1,035
1944	1,190,154	38,083	86,900	43,450	540	220
1949	1,024,387	52,192	40,080	24,411	---	---
1954	474,154	22,005	25,446	12,611	---	---

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

### Sheep

Large range bands of sheep, once common in Columbia County, have virtually disappeared. Small farm flocks are the common type of sheep operation today. A large increase in the land under cultivation accompanied by the trend toward beef cattle resulted in abandonment of sheep raising. In this change-over sheep have declined steadily since 1930 when slightly over 25,000 head were reported and only 1,200 head were enumerated in 1954. Once as important as beef cattle production, sheep now rank last as a source of income to livestock farmers in Columbia County. About 30 farms kept sheep during 1954. This resulted in an average flock size of 40 head compared with an average flock of 100 head as recently as 1949. Twenty-six farms sold sheep and lambs in 1954 and a total of 1,000 head were sold for a gross return of \$17,000. Wool was shorn on 25 farms from 1,100 head of sheep in 1954 with about 11,000 pounds produced.

### Hogs

Raising and feeding hogs has declined steadily since about 1925. Almost 1,400 head of hogs were kept on 109 Columbia County farms during 1954 whereas in 1939 there were 278 farms raising hogs. A decreasing number of farms feed hogs for home or custom butchering for their own household use--a common practice prior to 1939. Many farms keep hogs only as a sideline. When cream production was widespread many farms kept hogs to use the skim milk for feed. As cream sales declined so did hog numbers. A total of 1,750 head of hogs were sold alive from 74 farms in the county in 1954 with the total value of hog sales approaching \$58,000. Hogs have usually ranked second as a source of income from livestock in Columbia County.

Horses and Mules

The horse and mule population has declined greatly since 1925. Using horses or mules for farm work, herding and transportation was common before 1925 but declined with the advent of mechanized farming in Columbia County. From 1935 to 1940 motorized grain cultivating and combining machinery and transportation vehicles replaced horses and mules. Only 500 head of horses were kept on 175 Columbia County farms in 1954 compared with over 9,000 head of horses and mules reported by the Census of 1920. The few head kept today are mainly for riding and are usually found one to three per farm throughout the county. Only 12 farms in the county used horses or mules for work power in 1954. Commercial trade in horses involves only a few farms and a few head per year.

Table 25.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules  
Columbia County, 1939-1954

Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1939	3,247	17,241	2,423
1944	2,928	8,695	1,444
1949	2,012	3,118	750
1954	1,394	1,199	496

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Poultry Farming

Poultry farming has declined in importance since 1939. The peak number of farms selling poultry or poultry products was reached around 1944 but it was not until about 1949 that the highest value of sales was reported. Columbia County farmers received almost \$68,000 for poultry and poultry products in that year. During 1954 total sales of poultry and poultry products from 117 farms approached \$39,000. The number of chickens kept on farms has decreased since 1939--about 15,600 birds reported in 1954 compared with 23,200 in 1939.

Table 26.- Chickens, Egg Production and Turkeys Raised  
Columbia County, 1939-1954

Year	Chickens (birds)	Egg Production (dozens)	Turkeys Raised (birds)
1939	23,186	144,221	4,827
1944	23,378	182,745	4,210
1949	16,964	106,336 1/	1,056
1954	15,578	63,003 1/	624

1/ Eggs sold only; does not include eggs consumed  
on farm where produced.

Egg production is the most important part of the poultry industry in the county. During 1954 a total of 96 farms sold eggs valued at \$28,000. The production of eggs for sale declined by almost one-half between 1949 and 1954.

Chickens for meat are only a by-product of egg production in the county. Seventy farms sold 4,400 birds with a total value of \$5,100 but there were no commercial broiler producers.

Turkey production was once an important and widespread part of the poultry industry. In 1939 almost 5,000 turkeys were raised on 58 farms. By 1954 this had declined to 624 turkeys on 5 farms. Two of the five farms produced 606 turkeys. Seven farms sold turkeys, ducks, geese or their eggs worth \$5,700 in 1954. Heavy breed turkeys are grown almost exclusively. No farms reported turkey hens being kept for breeding in 1954.

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold  
in 1954 - \$38,826

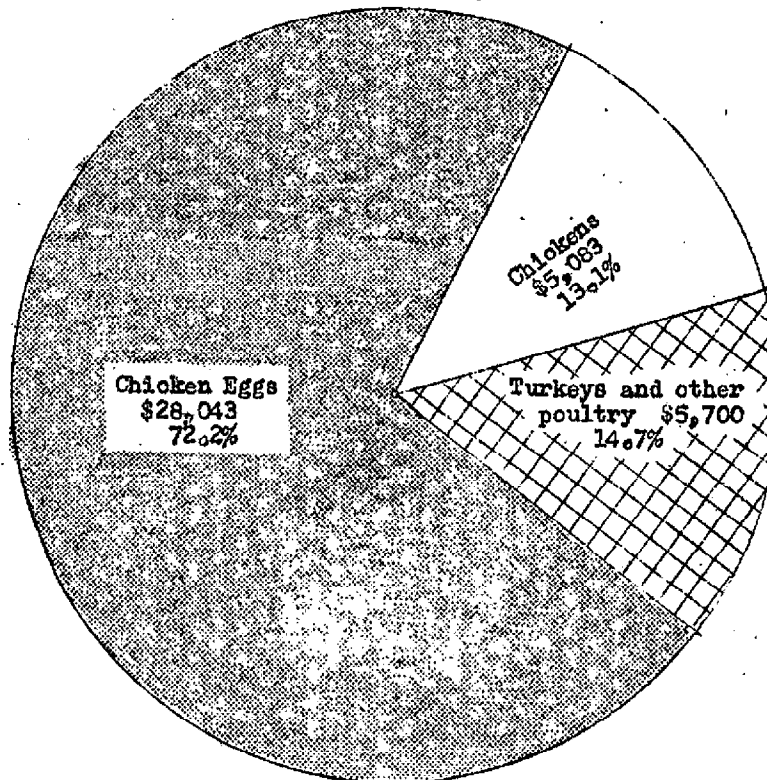


Figure 12.- Divisions of Columbia County Poultry Industry  
By Products Sold in 1954  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

#### Small Animal Industry

Small animal industry is of minor importance in Columbia County. Bees are the most common and there has been an increase in recent years in number of bees kept. During 1949 about 100 hives were reported on 25 farms. Two hundred hives were reported in 1957 by State Department of Agriculture apiary inspectors. During 1950 fourteen farms produced honey and 7 sold honey and the value of honey and wax sold totaled \$140. Only 4 farms kept goats in 1954 with 26 head being reported.